

Linguistic Immersion and Its Role in Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers

Middlebury College as a Model

Nizar Qbilat & Hassan Alhosani



Study Focus

Beyond the Classroom

Explores immersion as an approach that extends beyond textbooks and formal instruction

Arabic as a Second Language

Examines how immersive environments accelerate acquisition for non-native speakers

Middlebury as a Model

Presents one of the most rigorous intensive Arabic programs in the United States

What Is Linguistic Immersion?



A Total Language Environment

Learners are placed in an environment where **only the target language** is used — continuously and meaningfully.



Continuous exposure and authentic practice



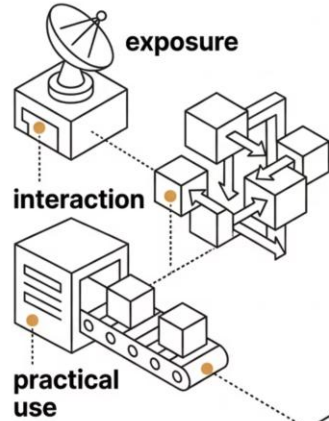
Communication-driven, not grammar-driven



Language becomes part of **daily life**

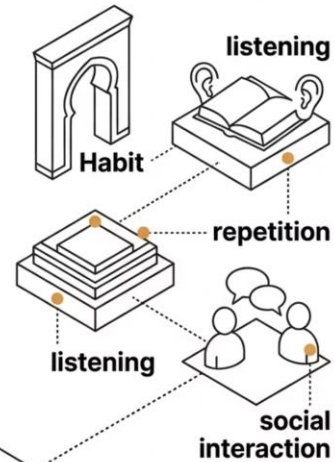
Theoretical Background

Applied & Communicative Linguistics



modern theory.
exposure,
interaction,
practical use.

Ibn Khaldun's Linguistic Faculty



classical theory.
listening,
repetition,
social interaction.

PRINCIPLE:
LANGUAGE ACQUIRED
THROUGH LIVING
EXPERIENCE, NOT
MEMORIZATION

Classical & Modern Alignment

Ibn Khaldun's medieval insight — that linguistic faculty is built through **listening, repetition, and social interaction** — aligns remarkably with modern communicative linguistics.

i Language acquisition depends less on memorizing grammar and more on **practical use in a living environment.**

Types of Linguistic Immersion

Environmental

Natural settings (living abroad) or artificial/educational environments designed to replicate them

Age-Based

Early immersion, partial early immersion, and late immersion — timed to developmental stages

Program-Based

Partial, full, bilingual, and two-way immersion programs — varying in intensity and structure

Middlebury College: The Model

7-8

Weeks

Intensive summer program duration

1yr

Equivalent

Academic content covered in a single summer

100%

Native Speakers

Instructors provide authentic linguistic and cultural models

Instruction integrates **intensive classes, daily assignments, discussions, projects, and oral presentations** — all in Arabic.



The Language Pledge

Students commit to using **only Arabic** — inside and outside the classroom — for the entire duration of the program.



Reduces dependence on the mother tongue



Encourages **direct thinking** in Arabic



Builds authentic communicative fluency

Immersion Activities



Drama & Performances

Theater, talent shows, and cultural events conducted entirely in Arabic



Arabic Dinner

Language, food, and culture combined — a living classroom experience



Wednesday Talk

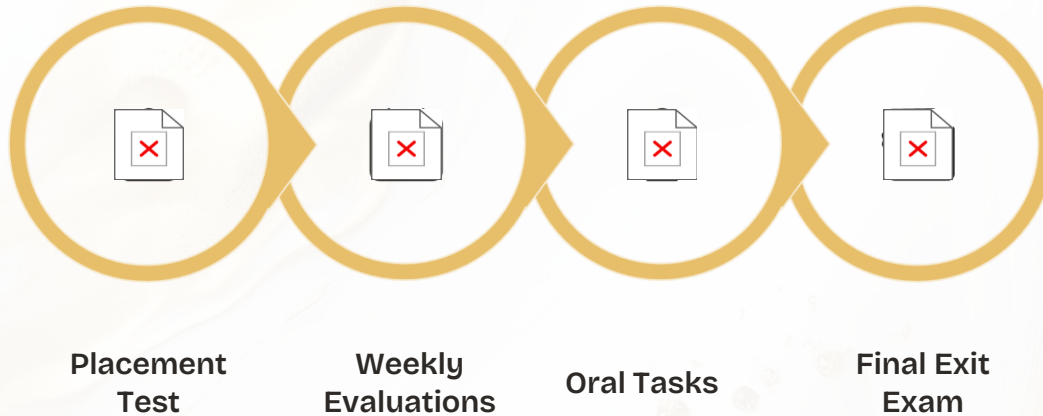
Structured cultural and social discussions in Arabic every week



Campus Environment

Signs, facilities, and all daily communication immersed in Arabic

Assessment & the Teacher's Role



The Teacher as Model

Beyond testing, the instructor's role is central to the immersive experience:

Pronunciation & Voice Clarity

Serving as a phonetic model for authentic Arabic

Correction & Intonation

Guiding learners through calm, precise feedback

Daily Practice Over Exams

Language tested through lived use, not only formal assessment

Conclusion

Most Effective Approach

Immersion is among the most successful methods for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers

Accelerated Fluency

Middlebury demonstrates how intensive immersion builds confidence and competence rapidly

Three Pillars of Success

Closed linguistic environment + continuous practice + institutional support

- ✔ Immersion strengthens **linguistic competence, cultural awareness, and social integration** — simultaneously.

